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ENG 3903-001: Women, Literature, and Language: The Memoir

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ENGLISH 3903, Fall 2009
Women, Literature, and Language: The Memoir
Tuesday 6:30 – 9:00
Coleman Hall 3160

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Office: Coleman Hall 3375
Office Hours: T/TH 2:00 – 3:00, W 2:00 – 4:00
and by appointment

Purpose of the Course

The emphasis in this course will be on memoirs written by women in English during the past 50 or so years. The purpose is to allow students to explore the various themes that women writers of the memoir have undertaken as well as the different forms and stylistic devices they have utilized in their writing.

Goals of the Course

By the end of the semester, students will be better able to:

1. view the memoir as an important literary genre that allows for a range of themes and stylistic devices;
2. perceive how the memoir fits into the larger framework of autobiographical writing;
3. understand the role that gender plays in the writing of memoir;
4. examine how race, class, and ethnicity can influence a memoir's theme and tone;
5. explore how memoirists use fictional techniques to write about personal events;
6. investigate the blurring of boundaries between fiction and creative nonfiction;
7. understand the various ethical issues involved in the writing of memoir.

Books and Materials

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, Maya Angelou
The Woman Warrior, Maxine Hong Kingston
Girl, Interrupted, Susanna Kaysen
Smashed, Koren Zailckas
The Bell Jar, Sylvia Plath
The Liar's Club, Mary Karr
Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight, Alexandra Fuller

Requirements

1. Write three papers. Two will be shorter papers, from 4-6 pages; the third will be somewhat longer (6-8) and will contain 2-3 outside sources. The second paper can be a personal essay dealing with a specific theme or time period of your life; the second paper can also be a review of a memoir other than one we've read for class.
2. Participate in class discussion.
3. Take short weekly quizzes.
4. Take a final exam.

Grade Breakdown

Essay 1	20%
Essay 2	20%
Essay 3	30%
Participation	10%
Reading quizzes	10%
Final exam	10%

Evaluation of Essays

NOTE: Essays will be graded following specific rubrics, one for academic papers/reviews, one for personal essays/memoirs; we will discuss these in class. All final versions of written work must adhere to the conventions of Standard written English, follow proper format (see below), and have been carefully proofread.

LATE PAPERS: I don't accept late papers unless there is a documented emergency. If possible, you must speak to me about possible extensions before the due date.

Format for Papers

Type your assignments on standard-size paper. Double-space. NO extra spaces between paragraphs, please, and NO oversized fonts. In the upper left-hand corner of the first page, type your name, my last name, course, and date. No cover page, please.

Plagiarism

I adhere strictly to the English Department policy on plagiarism:

Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including a grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office. Plagiarism is defined as "The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's original work" (Random House Dictionary of the English Language)

Writing Center

The Writing Center, located in room 3110 of Coleman Hall, gives you the opportunity to talk with a tutor about your writing, especially if you are having problems beginning a paper or know that you are weak in certain areas.

NOTES: It is your responsibility to contact me or a fellow student to find out what you've missed, including any handouts or assignment changes.

CLASS SCHEDULE

#1	08/25	Introduction to class
#2	09/01	Girl, Interrupted (entire book)
#3	09/08	Smashed, 1-154
#4	09/15	Smashed, 157—to the end
#5	09/22	Bell Jar, 1-111
#6	09/29	Bell Jar, 112—to the end
#7	10/06	Liar's Club, 1-96 Paper #1 due
#8	10/13	Liar's Club, 97-197
#9	10/20	Liar's Club, 198 to the end
#10	10/27	Don't Let's Go, 1-148
#11	11/03	Don't Let's Go, 149 to the end
#12	11/10	I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, 1-136 Paper #2 due
#13	11/17	I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, 137-289

THANKSGIVING BREAK

#14	12/01	Woman Warrior, "No Name Woman," "White Tigers," and "Shaman"
#15	12/08	Woman Warrior, "At the Western Palace," "A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe" Review for Final Paper #3 due

NOTE: I may make minor changes to this syllabus in order to suit the needs of the class. Changes will always be announced in advance.